CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A user interface for a handwriting recognition system used with a visual display having a screen, said interface comprising:

means for opening a semi-transparent window in said display, said semi-transparent window permitting a user to view features of a portion of said display over which said semi-transparent window is opened, said semi-transparent window having boundaries which define a contrasting area on said display.

2. The user interface of claim 1, further comprising:

an input device for inputting data from said user;

and wherein said semi-transparent window is opened automatically when said user activates said input device at a point on said screen.

3. The user interface of claim 2, wherein said semi-transparent window opens in a predetermined size and position relative to said point on said screen.

4. The user interface of claim 3, further comprising means for permitting said user to alter said size of said semi-transparent window after said semi-transparent window opens.

5. The user interface of claim 4, further comprising means for automatically increasing said size of said semi-transparent window when said user touches said touch-activated screen at a point on said touch-activated screen which is outside said borders of said

semi-transparent window after said semi-transparent window has been opened, said increased size of said semi-transparent window including said point on said touch-activated screen which is outside said borders.

6. The user interface of claim 3, further comprising means for permitting said user to move said semi-transparent window to a new position in said display from said predetermined position after said semi-transparent window has been opened.

7. The user interface of claim 3, wherein said predetermined size and position are alterable by said user.

8. The user interface of claim 1, wherein said contrasting area is of a color which is different from a color of said portion of said display over which said semi-transparent window is opened.

9. The user interface of claim 1, wherein said contrasting area is of a brightness which is different from a brightness of said portion of said display over which said semi-transparent window is opened.

10. The user interface of claim 2, wherein said opened semi-transparent window closes automatically upon an elapse of a predetermined time interval during which no input by said user occurs.

11. The user interface of claim 1, wherein said semi-transparent window opens automatically when said device requires entry of information from said user.

12. The user interface of claim 2, further comprising means for generating a visual representation on said display of movement of said input device implement by said user across said screen.

13. The user interface of claim 12, in which said means for generating stops generating said visual representation of said movement of said writing implement across said display when a predetermined period of time elapses after cessation of movement of said input device on said display.

14. The user interface of claim 2, wherein said input device is selected from the group consisting of: a touch-activated screen, a mouse, a joystick, a keyboard, a trackball and an electronic tablet.

15. A user input system for use with an electronic device, comprising:

an input device;

a visual display having a screen, said screen including means for generating an output signal in response to a signal generated by said input device;

means for opening a semi-transparent window in said display in response to said signal from said input device, said semi-transparent window permitting a user to view features of a portion of said display over which said semi-transparent window is opened, said semi-

transparent window having boundaries which define a contrasting area on said display and being sized to receive input from said input device, said input including at least one manuscript character;

means for recognizing said at least one received manuscript character; and

means for displaying said at least one recognized manuscript character on said visual display.

16. The user input system of claim 15, wherein said semi-transparent window is opened automatically in response to said input from said input device.

17. The user input system of claim 16, wherein said semi-transparent window opens in a predetermined size and position relative to a point at which said at least one manuscript character is input.

18. The user input system of claim 17, further comprising means for permitting said user to alter said size of said semi-transparent window after said semi-transparent window is opened.

19. The user input system of claim 18, further comprising means for automatically increasing said size of said open semi-transparent window when said at least one manuscript character is input at a point on said screen which is outside said borders of said semi-transparent window after said semi-transparent window has been opened, said increased size of said semi-transparent window including said point which is outside said borders.

20. The user input system of claim 17, further comprising means for permitting said user to move said semi-transparent window to a new point in said display from said predetermined position after said semi-transparent window has been opened.

21. The user input system of claim 17, wherein said predetermined size and position are alterable by said user.

22. The user input system of claim 15, wherein said contrasting area is of a color which is different from a color of said portion of said display over which said semi-transparent window is opened.

23. The user input system of claim 15, wherein said contrasting area is of a brightness which is different from a brightness of said portion of said display over which said semi-transparent window is opened.

24. The user input system of claim 15, wherein said open semi-transparent window closes automatically upon elapse of a predetermined time interval during which no touching of said touch-activated screen occurs.

25. The user input system of claim 15, wherein said semi-transparent window opens automatically when said device requires entry of information from said user.

26. The user input system of claim 15, further comprising means for generating a visual representation on said display of movement of said input device by said user across said screen.

27. The user input system of claim 26, in which said means for generating stops generating said visual representation of said movement of said input device across said screen when a predetermined period of time elapses after any movement of said input device.

28. The user input system of claim 15, wherein said electronic device is a telephone.

29. The user input system of claim 15, wherein said electronic device is a computer.

30. The user input system of claim 15, wherein said electronic device is a personal digital assistant.

31. The user input system of claim 15, wherein said input device is selected from the group consisting of: a touch-activated screen, a mouse, a joystick, a keyboard, or trackball, and an electronic tablet.

32. In a handwriting recognition system used with a visual display having a screen, a method of providing a user interface, said method comprising:

opening a semi-transparent window in said display, said semi-transparent window permitting a user to view features of a portion of said display over which said semi-transparent

window has opened, said semi-transparent window having boundaries which define a contrasting area on said display.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein said semi-transparent window is opened automatically when said user activates an input device for translating movement of said input device into a graphical representation of said movement on said screen.

34. The method of claim 33, wherein said semi-transparent window opens in a predetermined size and position relative to a point on said screen at which said user initiates movement of said input device.

35. The method of claim 32, further comprising means for permitting said user to alter said size of said semi-transparent window after said semi-transparent window has opened.

36. The method of claim 35, further comprising the step of:

automatically increasing said size of said open semi-transparent window when said user activates said input device at a point on said display which is outside said borders of said semi-transparent window after said semi-transparent window has been opened.

37. The method of claim 34, further comprising the step of:

permitting said user to move said semi-transparent window to a new position in said display from said predetermined position after said semi-transparent window has opened.

38. The method of claim 34, wherein said predetermined size and position are alterable by said user.

39. The method of claim 32, wherein said contrasting area is of a color which is different from a color of said portion of said display over which said semi-transparent window has opened.

40. The method of claim 32, wherein said contrasting area is of a brightness which is different from a brightness of said portion of said display over which said semi-transparent window has opened.

41. The method of claim 32, wherein said open semi-transparent window closes automatically upon elapse of a predetermined time interval during which no input from said input device occurs.

42. The method of claim 32, further comprising the step of:

opening said semi-transparent window automatically when said device requires entry of information from said user.

43. The method of claim 32, further comprising the step of:

generating a visual representation on said display of movement of said input device by said user.

44. The method of claim 43, further comprising the step of:

ceasing generating said visual representation of said movement of said input device when a predetermined period of time elapses after any movement of said input device.

45. The method of claim 32, wherein said input device is selected from the group consisting of: a touch-activated screen, a mouse, a joystick, a keyboard, a trackball, and an electronic tablet.

46. A method of inputting data to an electronic device, comprising:

displaying information on a visual display having a screen;

generating an output signal in response to movement of an input device;

opening a semi-transparent window in said display in response to said movement of said input device, said semi-transparent window permitting a user to view features of a portion of said display over which said semi-transparent window is open, said semi-transparent window having boundaries which define a contrasting area on said display and being sized to receive an input from said input device, said input including at least one manuscript character;

recognizing said at least one manuscript character; and

displaying the recognized manuscript characters on the visual display.

47. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of:

opening said semi-transparent window automatically when said user moves said input device.

48. The method of claim 46, wherein said semi-transparent window opens in a predetermined size and position relative to a point on said display at which said user commences movement of said input device.

49. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of:

permitting said user to alter said size of said open semi-transparent window after said semi-transparent window opens.

50. The method of claim 49, further comprising the step of:

automatically increasing said size of said open semi-transparent window when said user touches said touch-activated screen at a point on said display which is outside said borders of said semi-transparent window after said semi-transparent window has been opened.

51. The method of claim 48, further comprising the step of:

permitting said user to move said semi-transparent window to a new position on said display from said predetermined position after said semi-transparent window has opened.

52. The method of claim 48, wherein said predetermined size and position are alterable by said user.

53. The method of claim 46, wherein said contrasting area is of a color which is different from a color of said portion of said display over which said semi-transparent window has opened.

54. The method of claim 46, wherein said contrasting area is of a brightness which is different from a brightness of said portion of said display over which said semi-transparent window has opened.

55. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of closing said open semi-transparent window automatically upon elapse of a predetermined time interval during which no touching of said touch-activated screen occurs.

56. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of:

opening said semi-transparent window automatically when said device requires entry of information.

57. The method of claim 46, further comprising the step of:

generating a visual representation on said display of movement of said input device.

58. The method of claim 57, further comprising the step of:

ceasing generating of said visual representation of said movement of said input device when a predetermined period of time elapses after any movement of said input device.

59. The method of claim 46, wherein said electronic device is a telephone.

60. The method of claim 46, wherein said electronic device is a computer.

61. The method of claim 46, wherein said electronic device is a personal digital assistant.

62. The method on claim 46, wherein said input device is selected from the group consisting of: a touch-activated screen, a mouse, a joystick, a keyboard, a trackball, and an electronic tablet.